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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a method for evaluating current discipline practices and provides a strategy for making decisions about adopting or adapting behavior change strategies commonly reported in the professional literature. The guide begins by explaining relevant terms and key features of effective behavioral support. The remainder of the text addresses six questions developed to guide decision making about adopting instructional strategies and curricula that can be used in making decisions about discipline procedure: (1) "Are the approach and its outcomes clearly defined?" (2) "What evidence exists that the approach is effective?" (3) "Is an accountability process built into the approach?" (4) "Is the approach sustainable?" (5) "Is the approach equitable?" and (6) "Are the costs of the approach and its implementation reasonable?" The different issues that should be considered under each of the six questions are discussed and summarized. An overview of some of the more prevalent approaches for reducing problem behavior and increasing appropriate behavior at the individual student and school-wide levels is provided along with the empirical support available for the particular approaches. A classroom checklist for promoting a positive and effective learning environment is included. (Contains 39 references.) (CR)

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RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING ABOUT EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT

by Tim Lewis

Lewis

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OVERVIEW

Few issues in education raise emotions as much as the issue of school "discipline." Frequent newspaper accounts of school violence continually remind the public of the extreme behavioral issues that confront schools today. The issue becomes even more complex when children and youth with disabilities are brought into the picture. Faced with the pressing issue of challenging behavior in schools, educators are forced to create systems to deal with the problems. Unfortunately, educators often unknowingly engage in discipline practices that do not change behavior, and in fact, may exacerbate the problem.

The purposes of this handbook are to provide a method to evaluate current discipline practices and to provide a strategy for making decisions about adopting or adapting behavior change strategies commonly reported in the professional literature. Throughout this handbook, the focus is on educating all students, including those with disabilities and children and youth who would be viewed as "at-risk" due to chronic or habitual patterns of problem social behavior. Issues, themes, and strategies within the document were shaped by the participants at the Office of Special Education Programs Projector Director's meeting held in Washington, DC, July, 1995 (Lewis, 1995).

Within this document, an important distinction between "best" practice and "promising" practice is made (Peters & Heron, 1993). Best practices refer to those procedures for which replicated data-based studies have been conducted. Promising practices refer to those procedures that may have theoretical support, but have limited or no research to support their use. When developing discipline practices, educators are encouraged to adopt best practice. If promising practices are used, special attention in monitoring implementation and student outcomes is warranted.

Following a brief description of terms, the remainder of this handbook addresses six questions developed to guide decision making about adopting instructional strategies and curricula (Carnine, 1995): (a) are the approach and it's outcomes clearly defined?, (b) what evidence exists that the approach is effective?, (c) is an accountability process built into the approach?, (d) is the approach sustainable?, (e) is the approach equitable?, and (f) are the costs of the approach and its implementation reasonable? While the above questions were developed with academic instruction and curricula in mind, the questions are equally appropriate in decision making about discipline procedures. In addition, a brief discus-

sion of legal and policy, and cultural issues surrounding the use of behavior reduction procedures with students with disabilities is provided.

TERMS

The term discipline has typically been linked with negative or punishing consequences when used within the context of schools. However, for the most part, the research community is in consensus in advocating that schools move beyond traditional "punishment" types of discipline. Researchers recommend schools develop broader, proactive, positive school-wide systems (e.g., Colvin, Kammeneui, Sugai, 1994; Sugai & Horner, 1994). To that end, the term "effective behavioral support" will be used throughout this paper in place of discipline. Effective behavioral support refers to a system of school-wide processes and individualized instruction designed to prevent and decrease problem behavior and to increase and maintain appropriate behavior. The preceding figure pro-

Key Features of Effective Behavioral Support

- Decisions about the effective behavioral support system are made by a team comprised of representatives of the entire school building, for example, general and special educators, educational assistants, related services personnel, and administrators.
- Desired outcomes are clearly defined. Outcomes are defined as broad school goals and at the individual student level (i.e., "appropriate" behaviors).
- The social, cultural, and ethnic community standards in which the school resides are taken into consideration.
- School and community members take ownership of the effective behavioral support system. Providing effective behavioral support is one of the top priorities of the school and neighborhood.
- A greater emphasis is placed on teaching pro-social behavior versus simply reducing problem behavior.
- An emphasis is placed on preventing problem behavior.
- Continual monitoring, accommodating, and changes are made through data-based decisions by the team.

vides an overview of essential features of effective behavioral support practices (Lewis, 1995).

1 ARE THE APPROACH AND IT'S OUTCOMES CLEARLY DEFINED?

A logical first step in building school-wide plans is to look at what already exists. Rather than spending incredible amounts of time developing systems, simply build on what research recommends or what others are currently using. Of course, one should use caution when borrowing to avoid using systems that do not meet the unique needs of your school. Two points of any program should be carefully examined. The first is the *approach* used to change student behavior. Does it fit within your school climate? is it detailed enough to allow you to implement it with confidence? The second point to consider s whether or not the *student outcomes* are directly associated with the system. Does the approach lead to student outcomes consistent with your school rules? Are student outcomes appropriate for your school's age, cultural, and ethnic makeup? Other considerations in examining the approach and outcomes are further discussed below.

In developing effective behavioral support, several component strategies should be adopted and shaped to meet individual school needs. This potentially necessitates piecing together a social behavior curriculum from several sources (e.g., several social skill curricula or behavior reduction strategies). Critical to the selection of any approach is the relationship to the larger school goal. For example, if the school's goal is to "create a positive learning environment for diverse learners," then the approaches adopted should lead to this outcome. Over reliance on punishment procedures such as in-school suspension may reduce the level of problem behavior in the school, but it does not enable the school to reach it's goal (i.e., creating a *positive* learning environment for *all* students). In assessing the clarity of potential approaches and their related outcomes, the following should be considered:

- What is expected from teachers?
- What is expected from the administrator(s)?
- What is expected from students?
- Are expected outcomes linked directly to the intervention?

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM TEACHERS?

While it is tempting to place all responsibility for behavior on the student's shoulders, the reality is that teachers and staff play a critical role in creating effective behavioral support. When analyzing potential procedures, expected staff behavior should be outlined to the point that all staff know *exactly* how to implement the approach, how to respond to student behavior, and where to get assistance if needed. For example, if social skill instruction is to be effective, we know the teacher must provide appropriate demonstrations of skills, arrange practice opportunities, and provide feedback on student performance (Sugai & Lewis, 1995). Mechanisms to include all staff should be outlined or developed for the specific approach under consideration. If the approach under investigation is vague or does not provide sufficient information, additional information, or alternative approaches, should be examined.

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR(S)?

As indicated above, effective behavioral support procedures should be implemented by *all* staff in the same manner to provide a unified school-wide approach. Critical to the success of any school-wide system is administrator support. While most procedures do not outline specific administrator tasks, any new approach adopted typically requires training, monitoring, and possibly re-formatting. Therefore, the administrator's role in implementing an effective behavioral support system should be three fold. First, the administrator should provide leadership and communicate to all staff the importance of establishing positive school-wide systems. Second, the administrator should determine what resources are necessary to provide staff with training and planning time. Finally, the administrator should continually monitor the plan to make sure all staff are participating and to provide any additional training or planning time as the need arises.

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM STUDENTS?

Social behaviors should be defined in such a manner that all students understand what is expected. For example, if the school team creates the rule "be cooperative," students should be clear on what "being coop-

erative" looks like across school settings. Students should also have a clear understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior and the associated outcomes of each (as determined by the building team). When developing effective behavioral support strategies, determine whether the intervention under review:

- Clearly defines key behaviors. The intervention should also allow for the development of specific examples taken directly from the school community.
- Provides opportunities for students to practice new prosocial skills.
- Provides a feedback mechanism to students.

ARE EXPECTED OUTCOMES LINKED DIRECTLY TO THE INTERVENTION?

In developing effective behavioral support procedures, it is important to analyze the match between what the investigators or published program authors did and student outcomes. Procedures should provide a logical fit between intervention and outcomes as well as data to support intervention effectiveness. For example, in conducting research on the effectiveness of teaching social skills, most investigators directly measure outcomes by observing students during times when skills should be used (e.g., recess). It is also common practice to ask others to evaluate change they may see in student behavior following an intervention. It is important to ask, "does the observation and/or report actually measure student demonstration of the skill taught?" One would not give a test of long division following an instructional unit on multiplication. Most teachers would give a test of multiplication problems. The same principle should apply for social behavior. If the goal of your instruction and intervention is to increase prosocial skills, for example "time on task," then select those interventions for which there is demonstrated effect on increasing "time on task."

The process of matching intervention to direct outcomes seems fairly straight forward, yet, it is not uncommon to find research that relies on indirect measures of intervention effectiveness. Studies that directly measure student behavior should be given more weight in final decision making than those studies that rely on secondary sources of information (e.g., parent reports). Outcomes that match the larger school goals are also preferred.

In Summary

- All staff should understand what is expected of them and how to implement effective behavioral support interventions.
- Strategies that clearly state expected student behaviors, provide opportunities to practice new skills, and have a feedback system built in should be adopted.
- Only those strategies with data-based and logical linkage between the intervention and outcomes are adopted.

2 WHAT EVIDENCE EXISTS THAT THE APPROACH IS EFFECTIVE?

While you examine existing practices to make sure the approach and student outcomes are clearly defined, explore a little deeper to determine what evidence (i.e., data) support their use. You should not dismiss practices for which there is limited support nor accept a practice simply because it has been published or for which some data supports its use. Rather, examine what support exists, how the procedure is similar or different from current accepted practices, and how does the procedure compare with effective and ineffective practices you are currently using.

As often as possible, educators are encourage to adopt best practices, those for which data clearly support a change in social behavior. The following provides a brief overview of some of the more prevalent approaches to managing challenging behavior at the individual student and school-wide levels. Each area is further sub-divided by key questions that should be addressed when reviewing potential strategies for inclusion in effective behavioral support and current empirical support for the procedures use. This overview is provided as a starting point and is not meant to provide complete information for decision making. Building teams are encouraged to examine the sample references, as well as others, before final decisions are made.

BEST PRACTICES : INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR CHANGE

What strategies reduce problem behavior? There are many best practices focusing on behavior reduction strategies. However, several behavior reduction strategies commonly found in schools today often lack empirical support for it's use. The table below (Table 1) provides a brief overview of common behavior reduction strategies, a definition, a summary of the current empirical support, and sample references.

TABLE 1. STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

Procedure	**Definition**	**Empirical Support**
Differential Reinforcement	Positive reinforcement is given following displays of appropriate behavior, reinforcement is withheld following displays of inappropriate behavior.	Empirical evidence continues to be generated demonstrating it's effectiveness in both decreasing problematic behavior and increasing appropriate behavior. Teacher must be able to control source of reinforcement to be effective.
Sample References: Deitz & Repp, 1983; Iwata & Vollmer, 1992		
Time Out	Students lose access to sources of positive for a reinforcement for a brief period of time.	Time out has been proven an effective behavior reduction strategy provided certain pre-requisite conditions are in place. For example, "time-in" must be reinforcing to the student and the procedure cannot be used during times or activities the student finds aversive or undesirable.
Sample References: Barton, Bruelle, & Repp, 1987; Harris, 1985; Noll & Simpson, 1979; Zabel, 1986		
Overcorrection	Students practice an appropriate alternative behavior, either through repeated practice of a replacement behavior or restoring a damaged environment.	Overcorrection has proven effective in reducing problem behavior. However, at present, there are limited demonstrations of the effectiveness of overcorrection across populations and behaviors.
Sample References: Doke & Epstein, 1975; Foxx & Azrin, 1972; Simpson & Sasso, 1978		

CONTINUED...

TABLE 1. STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING PROBLEM BEHAVIOR (CONTINUED)

Procedure	Definition	Empirical Support
Delivery of Aversives	Students are given an aversive consequence following inappropriate behavior.	Positive effects have been noted in reducing harmful behaviors such as self-injury. Potential harmful side effects (e.g., aggression) also are a strong possibility when aversives are used.
Sample References: Carr & Lovaas, 1983; Favell et al., 1982		
Corporal Punishment	Students are given an aversive consequence that impacts one of the bodies senses (e.g., touch, taste) following inappropriate behavior.	There is limited support regarding the effectiveness of corporal punishment in reducing problem behavior.
Sample References: Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders [CCBD], 1990		
Expulsion and Suspension	Student is removed from school for a specified period of time following inappropriate behavior.	There is limited support regarding the effectiveness of expulsion and suspension in reducing problem behavior.
Sample References: CCBD, 1989		

What strategies increase appropriate behavior? Two types of interventions are summarized within this section, interventions that focus on directly teaching appropriate behaviors, and interventions that focus on changing the instructional environment to support appropriate behavior. Much of the current research uses a combination of the two strategies. Table 2 provides a broad overview of common strategioes to increase appropriate behavior.

What behaviors are targeted for intervention? A wide variety of problem (e.g., aggression, self-injury, tantrums) and appropriate (e.g., requests for assistance, problem solving, anger management) behaviors have been targeted. The current research base is best characterized as focusing on single or combination of single behaviors versus larger response classes of problem and appropriate behavior (Lewis & Sugai, 1996b).

TABLE 2. STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Procedure	**Definition**	**Empirical Support**
Social Skill Instruction	Directly teaching social behavioral skills. Typically through teacher instruction, demonstrations and role plays.	Large data base demonstrating the effectiveness in bringing new behavior to fluency, limited data demonstrating generalization and mainte nance effects without direct intervention.
Sample References: Lewis, Sugai, Mercer, & Heilman, 1995; Sugai & Lewis, 1995		
Differential Reinforcement	Positive reinforcement is given following displays of appropriate behavior, reinforcement is withheld following displays of inappropriate behavior.	Effective in decreasing problematic behavior and increasing prosocial alternatives.
Sample References: Deitz & Repp, 1983; Iwata & Vollmer, 1992		
Functional Communication Training	After it is determined "why" a student demonstrates problem behavior, teach an appropriate "replacement" behavior that serves the same function for the student.	Several demonstrations of effectiveness in increasing the use of pro-- social alternative behavior. Majority of research conducted with students with developmental disabilities
Sample References: Arndorfer & Miltenberger, 1993; Carr & Durand, 1985; Cooper, Wacker, Sasso, Reimers, & Donn, 1990; Lewis & Sugai, 1996a, 1996b		
Instructional Modifications	Altering the general education curriculum to increase success, engaged time, and completion of tasks.	When paired with direct teaching (e.g., social skills, functional communication training), effective in reducing problem behavior and increasing appropriate behavior.
Sample References: Dunlap, Kern-Dunlap, Clarke, & Robbins, 1991; Kern, Childs, Dunlap, Clarke, & Falk, 1994; Munk & Repp, 1994		
Self-management	Student implements self monitoring, self instruction, and self reinforcement.	Effective strategy when paired with other direct teaching or environmental manipulations.
Sample References: Hughes & Lloyd, 1993; Seabaugh & Schumaker, 1994		

How are interventions selected? Two methods of selection appear within the literature. The first simply focuses on decreasing problem behavior by implementing a consequence following the occurrence of problem behavior (e.g., time out if the student hits peers). The second focuses on first assessing "why" students display problem behavior through the use of "functional assessment." Functional assessment examines the relationship between problem behavior and classroom events that happen prior to and immediately following. Common patterns or sequences of problem behavior and classroom events suggest why a student may display problem behavior, or what "function" the behavior serves the student. For example, if a student's problem behavior is more common during math class, the behavior may function to avoid or "escape" math (e.g., student is sent to office for disrupting class). On the other hand, if the student's peers laugh and encourage the student to be disruptive, the disruptive behavior may function to gain attention. Functional assessment leads to the development of interactions that the student an appropriate alternative or replacement behavior, or arrange the environment to promote appropriate behavior (Lewis & Sugai, 1996a, 1996b).

How is generalization and maintenance of behavior change promoted? Data are inconclusive about the various strategies designed to reduce problem behavior and increase appropriate behavior. The majority of reviews indicate that to promote generalized responding, direct interventions across settings, time, and persons are needed (Chandler, Lubeck, & Fowler, 1992; Lewis et al., 1995).

Are there strategies that are more appropriate with specific behaviors, age groups, or categories of disabilities? Recent research in the area of functional assessment indicates that the *function* of the problem behavior (i.e., avoid or get something) appears to be of more importance in determining appropriate behavior change strategies than type of behavior, age of student, and category of disability.

BEST PRACTICES: SCHOOL WIDE

At present, there is limited research on the implementation of school-wide behavior change procedures. School-wide proactive discipline plans however, are often cited within the professional literature as best practice (e.g., Lewis, Chard, & Scott, 1994; Peacock Hill Working Group, 1991;

Sugai & Horner, 1994). To date, school-wide systems should be viewed as a promising practice. Confidence in a school-wide system can be gained by using interventions that have evidence to support their use at the individual student level (e.g., social skill instruction). When assembling best practices into a comprehensive school-wide system, or when evaluating school-wide programs, consider the following questions:

- What is the primary focus of the school-wide system (punishment to reduce inapporopriate behavior or instruction to increase appropriate behavior)?
- Are best practices being used?
- How is progress/success of the program determined?
- Are behavior change strategies implemented with integrity (is everyone implementing strategies according to the plan)?
- How are staff development, inservice, and consultation needs being met?

In Summary

- There is limited evidence to support the use of punishment based procedures to reduce problem behavior.
- There is a large body of evidence to support the use of proactive instructional strategies such as social skill instruction, differential reinforcement, and instructional modification to increase appropriate behavior.
- There is an emerging data-base to support the use of functional assessment in intervention selection.
- The majority of behavior change research conducted to date is at the individual student level.

E. IS AN ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS BUILT INTO THE APPROACH?

As outlined previously, effective behavioral support should adopt best practices that are clearly defined with outcomes that match the school's goals. The above section also encourages educators to make sure practices adopted are supported by evidence that indicates they actually do what they are designed to do. Ultimately, educators themselves will need to make their own data-based decisions about what works. Given that no two schools are exactly alike, what works for one may not work for another. Therefore, it is essential that schools carefully monitor how procedures are implemented to trouble-shoot systems that do not appear to be changing student behavior.

Impementation and monitoring of behavior change procedures do not need to be implemented with the same rigor as research, however, some form of monitoring should be put into place to insure success. School administrators should take on the responsibility to oversee data collection and decision making processes. In addition, if data indicate interventions are not working due to incomplete or inconsistent implementation, administrators should make sure training and additional resources are available. Feedback systems should be targeted at the teacher and student level. Decisions about continuing, modifying, or abandoning any procedure should be based on data and made by the building team.

TEACHER VARIABLES

The first level of accountability should be at the teacher or instruction level. Once effective behavioral support interventions or strategies are developed, implementation should be carefully monitored, especially in their initial use. For example, a simple checklist of key features of an adopted strategy could be developed. Teachers could then be observed by peers and feedback given via the checklist on key teaching behaviors (see Figure below as an example of a peer feedback sheet. Additional information and definitions for each item would be necessary pior to use). By evaluating instruction, data based decisions can be made about

the interventions effectiveness. For example, if the intervention does not show change in student behavior, and yet the data indicate building staff are implementing procedures correctly, a change in intervention is probably warranted. Without the data on teaching, school's run the risk of prematurely abandoning a potentially effective strategy (i.e., student behavior is not changing because the intervention is not being implemented appropriately).

Promoting Positive & Effective Learning Environments
Classroom Checklist

Instruction

- ☐ Advanced organizers given
- ☐ Specific explanations and clear instructions given
- ☐ Lesson well paced
- ☐ Student attention maintained throughout lesson
- ☐ Opportunity for student practice
- ☐ Frequent and detailed positive feedback given to students
- ☐ Appropriate error correction and review strategies employed

Classroom Management

- ☐ Precorrects given
- ☐ Active positive interactions with students
- ☐ Positive feedback given to students
- ☐ Smooth transitions between lessons/activities
- ☐ Differential reinforcement used appropriately
- ☐ Non Instructional time is kept to a minimum
- ☐ Positive, predictable, orderly learning environment maintained
- ☐ Classroom rules posted and enforced consistently and equitably
- ☐ Individual behavior change strategies implemented appropriately

STUDENT VARIABLES

The next level of accountability are student outcomes. Given the large investment of time and energy required to develop effective behavioral support, it is important to make sure it is working. The most reliable way to check for success is through direct observation. For example, based on instruction, develop examples of appropriate behavior for each school rule (e.g., using neutral or positive language during class discussions is a way to show "respect"). The key is to count behavior directly related to the objectives of the effective behavioral support intervention. Larger school goals can be measured through procedures such as office referral counts or staff and parent survey.

In Summary

- To build accountability, data should guide decisions about keeping, abandoning, or modifying procedures.
- Data should be simple, tied directly to the procedures and responsibility for collection shared by all staff.

4 IS THE APPROACH SUSTAINABLE?

All to often schools jump on the latest band wagon, devote incredible amounts of time and energy to implementing the latest trend, only to have staff loose interest and see their hard work fizzle out. One way to avoid a continual search for the next greatest thing is to plan ahead to make sure there are strategies in place that insure effective behavioral support will remain a priority of the school and remain in place to insure continued student success. The first question to ask in determining sustainability is, "are the proposed effective behavioral support procedures *practical*?" Practical should be determined in terms of:

- Is sufficient time to develop and implement procedures available?
- Is technical assistance available to maintain the system?
- Is administrative support in place?

If the answers to the above are largely "no," that does not preclude effective implementation, but does create barriers that must be addressed by the team. Other factors should also be considered in determining the sustainability of effective behavioral support. The most important factor is the presence of a monitoring and decision making process. Developing and implementing effective behavioral support systems may be costly in terms of time and needed assistance, however, if schools monitor teacher and student outcomes, the data should show that the investment is producing desired outcomes. If desired outcomes are not evident, then a process to make data-based decisions should occur early on to reduce the amount of effort put into non-effective strategies.

In Summary

- Determine the practicality of implementing interventions with respect to time, available technical assistance, and administrator support.
- Monitor implementation to insure sustainability.

5 IS THE APPROACH EQUITABLE?

One of the major premises in developing school-wide effective behavioral support is that it will provide a consistent, proactive structure to insure student success. This does not mean a single strategy will be used for all students nor does it mean success will be defined in the same terms for all students. Rather, a collection of strategies should be used, and individual plans should be developed for students with "chronic" challenging behavior patterns, to meet the school's larger social behavioral goals. To make sure effective behavioral support provides an opportunity for all students to be successful, consider the following:

- Are rules and expectations reflective of the school and local community?
- Do specific behavior change procedures focus on, and allow students to learn to comply with, school expectations?

- Are all students held accountable to the school rules? If so, are there structures in place that can accommodate diverse learners to assist them in successfully complying with school rules?
- Does effective behavioral support allow for flexibility in meeting individual student and classroom needs?

Once again, the focus on any effective behavioral support structure should be directly related to the school's larger goal or mission. To that end, the system should incorporate interventions that allow most students to meet the school's goal and develop individually based interventions to assist those students
who do not.

In Summary

- Proactive, positive school rules should be established.
- All students should be held accountable to school rules.
- Teaching and support interventions at the school-wide and individual student level should be implemented to insure *all* students can successfully meet school rules.

6 ARE THE COSTS OF THE APPROACH AND IT'S IMPLEMENTATION REASONABLE?

Unlike academic curricula that carry financial costs associated with texts and other materials, effective behavioral support costs are typically assessed in terms of staff time and energy. The bottom line formula in determining "reasonable" is the cost of time an intervention takes to develop, implement and monitor weighed against student outcomes. The final formula the school develops for gauging what is "reasonable" will depend on several variables. It is important to first consider some givens:

- Developing effective behavioral support takes a lot of start-up time and staff energy (e.g., meetings, reviewing literature, developing curricula, accessing technical assistance).
- Staff already engage in a considerable amount of time addressing problem behavior without effective behavioral supports, but in a more reactive, consequence driven model.
- A small percentage (approximately 5%) of the student body will take up a large portion of the overall time devoted to effective behavioral support.

Once an effective behavioral support system is in place, it is essential to monitor the program on an on-going basis. While upfront costs may seem overly expensive, the long term outcomes (e.g., improved student behavior, less staff time spent on behavior, more time spent engaged in academics, increase student achievement) should prove the costs worthwhile.

In Summary

- Initial costs in establishing effective behavioral support are great in terms of staff.
- Comparison of time spent implementing your current system to an effective behavioral support system should be undertaken to determine reasonableness.
- Final analysis of reasonableness should factor in the benefits to students and staff.

LEGAL AND POLICY ISSUES

Legal and other policies often impact what behavior change procedures are used, or not used, in schools. The intent in including the following topics is not to engage in a debate on the use of certain procedures (see Repp & Singh, 1990; Sprague & Horner, 1991), rather, to make school districts aware that these policies influence both research and application of discipline and effective behavioral support procedures.

WHAT LEGAL IMPLICATIONS EXIST IN THE USE OF COMMON DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES?

A memorandum from the U. S. Department of Education responds to frequently asked questions regarding the rights of students with disabilities and schools' authority to implement procedures such as expulsion and suspension (Heumann & Hehir, 1995). For example, in determining the appropriateness of suspension/expulsion, the critical question to answer focuses on the rule infraction and its relation to the student's disability. If it is determined the rule infraction (non-firearm infractions) is related to the child's disability, the school district may initiate a change in placement but may not expel the student beyond ten school days (Heumann & Hehir, 1995).

HOW DO CULTURAL/ETHNIC ISSUES IMPACT THE USE OF DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES?

When reviewing best practice literature for potential effective behavioral support strategies for use with culturally diverse student populations, critical questions should be asked concerning the subjects and procedures used in the study such as (a) were normative standards used to assess culturally diverse students?, (b) did the sample include culturally diverse children?, and (c) were issues of treatment acceptability explored among teachers and community members of culturally diverse students? (Sprague & Horner, 1991; Utley, 1995).

CONCLUSION

Schools can no longer assume children will enter classrooms ready to learn, understand social expectations, and comply with school rules. Schools can also be confident that the threat, or implementation, of suspension and other traditional discipline procedures are not going to reduce problem behaviors. Schools can assume that to be effective in reducing challenging behavior will require rethinking current practices.

While developing effective behavioral support in place of traditional discipline procedures are time consuming and often difficult, the alternative (i.e., increasing problem behavior, teacher attrition) is even more costly in the long run.

Throughout this handbook a team-based approach to dealing with challenging behavior is advocated. Effectively changing problem behavior is beyond the expertise of a single special or general educator. Providing a school-wide unified approach to dealing with challenging behavior meets several objectives. First, students with disabilities who display challenging behavior can be more successful in the school environment where support structures are in place. Second, students who are not identified as disabled, but present challenging behavior, receive "specialized" services via individual teaching interventions in addition to the school-wide support structures. Finally, by building a system with a prevention focus, the severity of later problem behavior may be lessened.

Educators are encouraged to *adopt* best practices, while at the same time, *adapt* best practices to meet individual school and student needs. This, of course, requires that educators do their homework prior to selecting interventions and carefully monitor implementation and student outcomes to make sound data-based decisions. Other suggestions for developing effective behavioral support systems outlined in this document, and a summary of the six critical questions in a checklist format, are provided below.

- Select best practices {research demonstrates that the procedure works with specific behavior(s)}.
- Create a comprehensive system that prevents as well as responds to problem behavior.
- Develop a team focus with shared ownership.
- Develop and tie effective behavioral support activities to larger school mission.
- Monitor all effective behavioral support activities, continue successful procedures, change or abandon ineffective procedures.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS TO SHAPE DECISION MAKING ABOUT EXISTING AND POTENTIAL EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT PROCEDURES

Are the approach and it's outcomes clearly defined?

Yes / No All Staff understand what is expected of them and how to implement effective behavioral support interventions?

Yes / No Strategies that clearly state expected student behaviors, provide opportunities to practice new skills, and have a feedback system built in are adopted?

Yes / No Only those strategies with data-based and logical linkage between the intervention and outcomes are adopted?

What evidence exists that the approach is effective?

Yes / No Consequent/punishment based procedure are used sparingly?

Yes / No Proactive instructional strategies such as social skill instruction, differential reinforcement, and instructional modification to increase appropriate behavior are used?

Yes / No Functional assessment strategies are used to develop individual interventions?

Yes / No Are best practices (strategies with empirical evidence) given preference over promising practice?

Is an accountability process built into the approach?

Yes / No Data are used to guide decisions about keeping, abandoning, or modifying procedures?

Yes / No Data collected are simple, tied directly to procedures and responsibility for collection shared by all staff?

Is the approach sustainable?

Yes / No Adequate time, technical assistance, and administrator support are available?

Yes / No Monitoring system to insure sustainability is in place?

Is the approach equitable?

Yes / No Proactive, positive school rules established?

Yes / No All students held accountable to school rules?

Yes / No Teaching and support interventions implemented at the school-wide and individual student level to insure *all* students can successfully meet school rules?

Are the costs of the approach and its implementation reasonable?

Yes / No Comparison of time spent with current system to new system undertaken?

Yes / No Final analysis of reasonableness factors in the benefits to students and staff?

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